

# Evolutionary Psychotherapy Optimistic Way of Thought

Not a Mere Speculative Philosophy,  
nor a Dogmatic Religion,  
nor Even a Materialistic Science

Our problem is that we have lost our mental equilibrium, because of our reaction to the environmental stimulation of our senses. We not only react, we also personalize the reaction, thinking: “I react.” Then we begin to experience the instability of what has been personalized. Our mind is then shaken by the changing vicissitudes of life. If, on the other hand, we depersonalize what has been personalized, our mind is not shaken any more by whatever happens to the impersonal phenomena. Thus we regain our mental equilibrium.

This “self-identity” or “notion of self” is indeed a tragedy because it carries with it all the miseries of life. We can turn our life into a joyful one by gaining freedom from this “delusion of self.” This makes Buddhism a very optimistic way of thought, though some writers have mistakenly called it pessimism. Buddhism is not a hopeless, pessimistic, melancholy religion or philosophy. It is a religion that carries a message of **true hope** and **salvation** to mankind. This is why it has survived for more than twenty five centuries in the world, and has guided millions of followers throughout the world, and the numbers are fast increasing in the modern intelligent section of the world.

Pessimism is to focus on the dark side of life and to ignore the bright side. Optimism is its opposite. Both Pessimism and Optimism are unilateral views, and as such they are definitely avoided by the Buddha. It is interesting to see how the Buddha views life. His position has been clearly stated by himself as follows:

“Because there is satisfaction in the world, beings are attracted to the world. Because there is dissatisfaction in the world, beings are repelled by the world. Those who see, the satisfaction as well as the dissatisfaction in the world, become independent of the world”.

The Buddha points out further: “All those sensual pleasures, enjoyed through the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, and the body, which captivates and fascinates the mind, are the satisfactions in the world. Their change, separation, and destruction, is the dissatisfaction in the world. Giving up attachment to these pleasures is becoming independent of the world”.

Of course, this process of depersonalization is not a sudden occurrence. It is a gradual process of growth and evolution. How long it takes depends on the individual’s level of maturity in terms of readiness to give up the pleasure principle and accept the reality of impersonality. According to the Buddha, an intelligent and serious meditator can reach perfection in a maximum of seven years. Some may take much longer. Yet some have done it in seven days, and very few overnight. The important point to realize, however, is that with every step one advances, there is a greater degree of happiness experienced.

This teaching of the Buddha is worthy of special study by modern psychologists. Such a study could end up in a major breakthrough in the field of psychotherapy. This means Buddhism is not a mere speculative philosophy, nor a dogmatic religion, nor even a materialistic science, but an evolutionary psychotherapy, where the human being transcends his animal weaknesses and reaches a supernormal superhuman transcendent state of perfection where all suffering comes to an end



# **BUDDHIST MYSTICISM**

## **Part 1: Realms of Experience**

**Ven. Dr M. Punnaji Maha Thera**

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So today we are going to talk about the Buddhist mysticism. Now very important word to be understood is Mysticism. The word Mysticism is a word used especially in Europe and mainly an English word. And that refers to a mist, mist because now if you are driving on a road and it is covered by a mist like a fog then you can't see the road. So in a similar way these people who go to meditate, going to the forest, and they live a different kind of life than the normal people who are living in society they cannot understand why those people are doing that. So it is a mystery for them. That is how these religions begin to become a kind of life that cannot be properly explained. And so it becomes a Mist or Mystery. And especially in religions like Christianity, they talk about God which is a mystery. And so they think religion is always clouded in mystery and cannot be properly understood.

And because of this there is a tendency for Buddhists also to think that the teaching of the Buddha is a mystery, but in actual fact Buddhism is the only religion which is not a mystery. There is no mystery in Buddhism. Everything can be understood, explained, and even experienced. So this is why Buddhism is Experiential. Now there again we have to distinguish between two words: Empirical and Experiential.

Now Empirical simply means what we can perceive through our senses when we can see things or hear things or smell things or taste things or touch things. Whatever we are able to experience through perception, sensory perception, those are the Empirical things.

Now these religious people tend to talk about things that cannot be experienced through the senses. That kind of thing is called Transcendental. So transcendental has that meaning that it is not something that you experience through your senses. And it is a mystery there. So we have this thing that we have heard called Transcendental Meditation. So Transcendental Meditation means that it is talking about something that we cannot even understand.

Now Buddhism has nothing to do with the transcendental. And Buddhism is not based on empirical observation like in science. Science is based on Empirical observation that means based on what we see, hear, smell, taste, touch. Now Buddhism is neither Empirical nor Transcendental. Buddhism is Experiential. Now we have to understand the difference among these three things: Experiential means you're looking not at what you see. Now if you look at what you see that is Empirical. You're looking at how you see. Looking at how you see is different from looking at what you see. So this is a very important thing.

**And we have been talking about what we call the “*Paṭicca-Samuppāda*”, which is the essence of the teaching of the Buddha.**

**And this “*Paṭicca-Samuppāda*” is really looking at how you see not looking at what you see.**

This is very important to understand.

Now when we talk about what is commonly called the Five Aggregates we have another word for it instead of calling it Aggregate. We have another word Cumulative. Now that is also little difficult to understand because it's not a common word that people use. Cumulative, we have alternate word which is maybe not so accurate but it is simply a Collection. Now I have explained this before, a Collection simply means we are collecting things that happened in the past and even something that has not even happened, which is in the future.

Future is only imaginary. And the past is something that is gone, finished. It's not an existence. But still we keep this in our memory. And it is because we keep the past in our memory, and we're also imagining the future, we are thinking that we are existing in time. If we are not able to recall the past and we cannot imagine the future, there will be no time for us because we'll be living only in the present. And the present is changing all the time. Every second the present is becoming the past. So the present is not a thing that is there. So in another word there is no time at all. So time is the creation of our mind because we have a thing called a Memory and we also have a thing called Imagination. If we didn't have Imagination, if we didn't have Memory there'd be no time at all.

You see in other words, we are collecting all these things, putting everything together, and we are thinking of Existence. I am existing in time. I existed in the past. I will exist in the future. And I'm existing now. That whole concept of Existence is a Delusion. You see this is the important thing to understand. This is why this is all made up story. It's made up.

So there's no mystery about this. All mysteries are made up of stories. And to stop all this is to become "Still". If we can stop all this thinking and become still that stillness is what we call "*Samādhi*". Here we have the quotation from the Buddha: "*Samādhim bhikkhave, bhāvētha. Samāhito bhikkhave, bhikkhu yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti.*"



## Stillness of Mind (*Samadhi*)



Quotation from the Buddha:

*Samādhim bhikkhave, bhāvetha. Samāhito bhikkhave,  
bhikkhu yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti.*

(Samyutta Nikāya, Vol. V: 414)

Do develop stillness of mind (*samadhi*),  
Oh! Bhikkhus. One, whose mind is still,  
is aware of how things come to be  
(*samāhite citte yathābhutaṃ pajānāti*).

Ven. Dr. M. Punnañi Maha Thera

BUDDHIST MYSTICISM (July 2011)

Cultivate “*Samādhī*” or Stillness of the Mind.

Now usually the word “*Samādhī*” is translated as Concentration. This is not Concentration.

“*Samādhī*” is Stillness of the Mind. And so we have the translation here: “Do develop stillness of mind (*samadhi*), Oh! Bhikkhus. One, whose mind is still, is aware of how things come to be (*samāhite citte yathābhutaṃ pajānāti*).”

So this is why we are talking about what is commonly considered to be a mystery is not a mystery at all. The mystery is how we created this world we are speaking of or thinking of. That is the Mystery. How this world came into being? Now some people say that the Buddha never spoke about how the world came into being. That is not true. **The whole teaching of the Buddha is about how this world came into being, not speaking about someone else who created the world but speaking about how you yourself created the world.**

This is why when someone long time ago, I had to go out go to a prison. We were talking in prison and some person in the prison, one of the prisoners, young man after my talk asked, "Who created the world?" So I remained silent for some time, and I said, "You created the world." But of course there was another monk there who thought I gave the wrong answer and started speaking. And he didn't allow me to speak after that.

So you see most Buddhists don't know or realize that the teaching of the Buddha is about creation, but not a Creator outside, but a Creator inside, which is your own Mind. Your own Mind is doing the Creation. This is why there is a verse, Pali verse where the Buddha is supposed to have said immediately after he became a Buddha.

That verse slipped away from my mind now.

**Audience:** *Builder of the house.*

**Venerable Punnaaji:** *"Aneka jāti saṃsāram."*

That's the one. *"Aneka jāti saṃsāram"*

*Aneka jāti saṃsāram –  
sandhāvissam anibbisam*



I have been traveling in this “*Saṅsāra*” seeking the Creator but I never found it. It is very painful to be born again and again. That's what that verse is. And then the next verse he said, “*Gaha kāraka diṭṭho’ si.*” I have seen you Creator. You will not create any more. All your supports have been broken down. The whole structure is destroyed. The mind has stopped creating. That emotional urge is brought to an end.

So that is what he said. There he points out that this Creator is not some external god or being or devil or anyone who created the world. It was your own mind. This is why the Buddha said:

*Mano pubbangamā dhammā  
Mano setthā, manomayā  
Manasāce padutthēna bhāsativā karotivā  
Tato nam dukkhamanvēti.*

“*Mano*” is the thinking part, the activity of the brain, especially what is called the cerebral cortex, the cerebrum. The thinking part is the starting point. And if we begin to think in the wrong way, suffering follows, but if we begin to think in the right way, we experience happiness.

Now there some who say that Buddhism is pessimistic. Buddhism is not something that is pessimistic. It is something which is really the way to happiness. And the way to happiness is through right thinking. If we think in the wrong way, we'll become unhappy. If we think in the right way, we'll become happy. So the important thing is how to be happy.

Some psychologists wrote a book called "How to be happy though human" So although we are human beings, we still can be happy. But there the assumption of the psychologists was that as a human being, you're normal unhappy. But the real problem is that it is the human being who can really become happy. But the point is that if we think in terms of Evolution, all animals were evolved unconsciously. They were unconscious. They were not conscious at all. It is the human being because of this faculty of thinking mainly the development of the brain, which is the development of the cerebrum or the cerebral cortex, where the thinking can be done.

And it is this human being who can become fully conscious, not only of the world, but also of the mistake that life made. When life began, life began with a mistake. And that mistake is what Charles Darwin saw as the Struggle for Existence. And there was this struggle for existence, but no one really existed because everyone had to die. Everyone had to die. Every individual dies.

But what continued to exist or what continued was not the individual but the generation. In other words, it is the Struggle for Existence that continued, but no one really existed because everyone had to die. And it was the Buddha who began to see that this is the problem, which was a mistake. When life began, life began with a mistake. And that is what we can call the Original Sin. Now Christians talk about the Original Sin. That is the Original Sin.

And so it was the Buddha who ultimately brought this process of Evolution to an end. And that is what we called “*Nirvāṇa*”. It is only a “Struggle to Exist” without real Existence. So the only thing that could be done is to stop this struggle. And the moment you stop the struggle to exist because Existence itself is an Illusion, there's no real existence here, so it is only when we have realized that existence is an illusion that the struggle stops.

So this is why when here we have, “*Do develop stillness of mind. Oh! Bhikkhus. One, whose mind is still, is aware of how things come to be.*”



## Awareness of the Contingent Concurrence (*Paticca Samuppāda*)



**What does he become aware of, as to how it comes to be?**

It is nothing but the awareness of the **Contingent Concurrence** (*Paticca Samuppāda*) of how things come to be which is stated in the **Four-Fold Sublime Reality** (*Cattāri Ariyasaccāni*):

He becomes aware, “this is the insecurity of life.”

He becomes aware, “this is the cause of insecurity.”

He becomes aware, “this is the cessation of insecurity.”

He becomes aware, “this is the way to the cessation of insecurity.”

What does it become aware of, as how it comes to be? It is nothing but the awareness of the Contingent Concurrence “*Paṭicca-Samuppāda*” of how things come to be which is stated in the form of the Four Sublime Realities or the Fourfold Sublime Reality “*Cattari Ariya Saccāni*”

He becomes aware, “this is the insecurity of life.”

He becomes aware, “this is the cause of the insecurity.”

He becomes aware, “this is the cessation of insecurity.”

He becomes aware, “this is the way to the cessation of insecurity.”

Now there is another saying here:

*Natthi jhānaṃ apannassa, pannā natthi ajhāyato,  
Yamhi jhānan ca pannā ca sa ve nibbānasantike.*

Also from the “*Dhammapada*”

Now this word “*Jhāna*”, we have called ecstasy. Now ecstasy means standing out. That is the meaning of ecstasy. **We are normally standing in the sensual world “*kāma loka*”. We are in the “*kāma loka*” because we see objects. And we become attached to objects or we become repelled by objects.** We become angry. We become frighten. We begin to worry over things. It's all Emotions. We are living in an emotional world. And this emotional world is the thing that is making us unhappy. We think we are happy, but actually we are unhappy all the time because of Emotions.

This is why the Buddha pointed out that the cause of all Unhappiness or Suffering is Emotion. It is only when we can get rid of these emotions that we can be really happy, so real happiness come from the absence of Emotions. **So here to enter the “*Jhāna*” is to get out of this emotional world and remain calm and tranquil. To have a calm and tranquil mind free of emotions that is the real happiness.** So it is that real happiness that we are after.

So when we talk about Buddhist mysticism, we are really talking about this Happiness, getting out of this emotional world and becoming calm and tranquil and happy, there in the “*Jhāna*”; the first “*Jhāna*”. Once we are in the “*Jhāna*” that means when our mind is calm and tranquil, it is only then that we can peep into our mind. Otherwise, we can't peep into the mind if we are worried about emotions. So the only way is to free the mind of emotions and then look within not outside. **And when we look within, we are able to see not what we see but how we see.** We're able to see how we are able to see things. How we have created the world that we see. That is what this means.



## No Insight (*Pannā*) Without Stillness of Mind (*Samādhi*)



*"Natthi jhānaṃ apannassa, paññā natthi ajhāyato,  
Yamhi jhānan ca paññā ca sa ve nibbānasantike."*

(Dhammapada verse #372)

There is no ecstasy (*Jhāna*) for one who has no insight (*Paññā*),  
There is no insight (*Paññā*) for one who has no ecstasy (*Jhāna*),  
One who has both ecstasy (*Jhāna*) and insight (*Paññā*),  
Is in the proximity of **Nibbāna**.

According to the Buddha, there is no Insight  
(*Paññā*) without Stillness of Mind  
(*Samādhi*).

Ven. Dr. M. Punnaji Maha Thera

BUDDHIST MYSTICISM (July 2011)

There is no ecstasy for one who has no insight. And a there is no insight for one who has no ecstasy. One who has both ecstasy and Insight is in the proximity of "Nibbāna". That is why. What this means is according to the Buddha there is no insight "Paññā" without Stillness of Mind "Samādhi".

And in talking about that, so we talk about what is this thing called Ecstasy, "Jhāna". There are three levels of Tranquility of Mind. **So these ecstasies are levels of Tranquility of Mind.**



## Four Levels of Ecstasy (*Jhāna*)



The word “ecstasy” means “standing out” (withdrawing) from the **Sensual Realm** (*kāma-bhava*) and reverting to the **Imagery Realm** (*rūpa-bhava*).

There are four levels of **Ecstasy** (*Jhāna*):

1. First Ecstasy – inference, inquiry, rapture, comfort, stillness
2. Second Ecstasy – rapture, comfort, stillness
3. Third Ecstasy – comfort, stillness
4. Fourth Ecstasy – stillness, introspection

Ven. Dr. M. Punnaji Maha Thera

BUDDHIST MYSTICISM (July 2011)

And the first level of Tranquility is the First Ecstasy. And there they are five factors in that: Inference, Inquiry, Rapture, Comfort, and Stillness; Inference, Inquiry, Rapture, Comfort, and Stillness.

**Now that Inference and Inquiry simply means the formation of concepts.** That means when we open our eyes, we see something. And when we see, we ask the question, “What is this?” “What is this thing that I see?” And then we draw a conclusion saying, “This is a man” or “This is a woman” or “This is a child” or “This is a tree” or “This is a bird” or “This is a dog” or “This is a cat” or “This is a table” or “This is a chair”.

**All that is the formation of a concept**

So when we look, we ask the question, “What is this?” And then we draw a conclusion. That is the meaning of Inference and Inquiry. First we inquire and then we infer. But we have put the word Inference first and Inquiry second only because when we try to get rid of these things, we have to get rid of the Inference part first and then only we get rid of the Inquiry part. This is the reason why that comes first.

And along with this Inquiry and Inference, but here again we have to see that there are two kinds of Inferences. One kind of inference arouses emotion. Another kind of Inference calms the mind. The kind of emotion that arouses, the kind of Inference that arouses emotion is what we try to avoid. And we begin to cultivate only the kind of Inference that calms the mind.

If a young man sees a girl and makes the Inference, “This is a very sexy looking girl”, then the emotion is aroused. So that is the wrong kind of Inference. On the other hand, if also that young man looks at the girl and says, “Oh! How ugly this face is” or “How ugly the shape is” or any of those things, then that attraction disappears; the emotion disappears.

So that is why these two things are called the “*Subha nimitta*” and the “*Asubha nimitta*”. So when you meditate, you’re asked to cultivate “*Asubha*”. “*Asubha*” means the undesirable. “*Nimitta*” is the Inference that you make.

So this is why we always meditate on “*Anicca*”, “*Dukkha*”, and “*Anattā*”:

- “*Anicca*” is instability
- “*Dukkha*” is painfulness
- “*Anattā*” is impersonality

Even if it is very beautiful, it is something that turns ugly. That means you may see a nice looking girl, but very soon that girl will become old and then it becomes ugly. So in the same way, if you begin to reflect on that, then that desire disappears. That is the meaning of meditating on Impermanence. All pleasures are impermanent. When we think of the Impermanence of pleasures, then that desire for pleasure disappears. And it turns into unhappiness.

All pleasures produce unhappiness because not only because it changes, it also parts from you. And not only parting, when you want it, you don't have it. So if you don't have it, when you want it, then you become unhappy as of a result. So this is why there are a lot of pleasures in the world that you might be able to get or you might not be able to get. And even if you get it, it will part from you. This is why life is not a bed of roses. It is a bed of thorns. This is very important to understand that.

This is why there was this philosopher, German philosopher, called Schopenhauer (Arthur Schopenhauer). He studied Buddhism, and he was so much attracted to Buddhism that he started his own philosophy based on Buddhism, according to how much he understood Buddhism. And he called his own philosophy Pessimism. And not only he called it Pessimism, he encourage everyone to become pessimistic. And he also said, "These children in the western society, they are brought up to think that life is a pleasant place, a bed of roses, and so they get into trouble as a result."

These people think that God has created the world for you to enjoy; be fruitful and multiply and enjoy life. And so they rush into the world to enjoy pleasures. And so they stick their eye, ears now with this phone, ear phones, and they think they're enjoying life because they are hearing sounds, or they look at these movies and they think they're enjoying life. But actually they become more and more unhappy.



And when they become unhappy, then they think, if we take some of these drugs, hallucinogenic drugs, they can become happy. And there they don't think that this drug can make you an addict. And as a result, you become even more unhappy and unhealthy. So they get into trouble. And this is why there's popularity of drugs because of that. That people without their knowledge there because they think the world is the place to be happy and enjoy. And so they rush into that enjoyment and as a result they suffer.

So this is why the Buddha pointed out that the pursuit of Sensual Pleasure is not the way to happiness. **The only way to happiness is to “Purify the Mind”; free the mind of these Emotional Disturbances.** It is only then that we can really be happy. True happiness comes not from enjoying pleasures but from purifying the mind.

They see the purpose of meditation. And even today even meditation is done in the wrong way. **They think meditation is concentration. And when they begin to concentrate, it is like tying a dog to a post. If you tie the dog to a post, the dog doesn't become a good dog because you tie the dog to a post. So in the same way, if you tie the Mind to a post by concentrating on something, the Mind doesn't become a good Mind by doing that.**

The only way to “Purify the Mind” is to watch the Mind every moment. That job is not 20 minutes in the morning, and 20 minutes in the evening, but 24 hours a day. Every moment we have to be watching our mind, "Am I thinking the right thought?" or “Am I thinking the wrong thought?”

**And we have been cultivating wrong habits from childhood. And as children, we don't know what to do or what to think. So whatever comes to the mind, we begin to think and that has become a habit.** So what we have to do is to stop that habit and start thinking only good thoughts and avoiding bad thoughts. That is what we call Selective Thinking. We have to select the thoughts we think. We're not thinking every thought that comes into the Mind. It is only by doing that which is the 24-hour job.

Even if we're doing other jobs, it doesn't matter, we can still do this. And it is only if we do this, that we can do the job also properly, whatever job we are doing. If our mind is filled with emotions, we won't be able to do the job properly. So even if you want to do the job properly, we have to purify the mind. **The mind being pure is very important.** And for that we have to do it every moment. Watch the mind and develop that new habit of becoming conscious all the time because these bad habits come unconsciously. So it is only by becoming conscious all the time that we can have a pure mind. The pure mind is really a conscious mind. The impure mind is an unconscious mind.

It is just the thoughts are coming into our mind unconsciously. They're all emotional thoughts. We are thinking of some quarrel we had in the past, or we may be thinking of some attraction that we had. And by thinking of these things or maybe some fears about something that might happen to us in the future, so by worrying about those things, we become unhappy as a result. So the only way to be happy is to free the mind of that kind of thinking. **That is the purpose of meditation.**

**And as we do that, as the Mind becomes purified, we enter the First Ecstasy, the first “Jhāna”**, where there is Inference, Inquiry which is all the good thinking, and Rapture which is the happiness of the Mind; Comfort, the Comfort in the body because all the muscles in the body relax and we feel comfortable. When emotions are in the mind, the body becomes tense and uncomfortable. So when the mind is free of emotions, the mind is happy and the body is comfortable. And the mind is also still or tranquil; the tranquility of the mind. My goodness! Mosquito!

**And then Second Ecstasy is where even the thinking part disappears.** And when the thinking part disappears, that is the Inquiry and Inference disappears, and you're left with only Rapture, Comfort, and Stillness of the Mind. So when we have reached second level, your mind is even more tranquil. But you may see things, you can have a picture in the mind, but that picture is not something outside.

So this is why it is called the “*Rūpa Loka*”. It is a world of Images. You enter the world of Images.

**Audience:** In a dream; like in a dream? Isn't it like a dream?

**Venerable Punnaji:** Something similar but not exactly the same

In dream you're simply the pictures are what you already have outside in the dream. These are not the dreams, pictures like that. And that of course only when you enter the second stage that you understand; what those pictures are not the kind of picture that we normally see.

**Billy Tan:** Bhante, the pictures in the dream are aroused unconsciously.

**Venerable Punnaji:** Yeah! Unconsciously Yeah!

**Billy Tan:** This is conscious.

**Venerable Punnaji:** Yeah! This is conscious. That's right! That's another point.

**Audience:** Bhante, is there a thing of semi-conscious or conscious?

**Venerable Punnaji:** Yeah What?

**Audience:** Semi-conscious or conscious?

**Billy Tan:** Here you're fully conscious, isn't it?

**Venerable Punnaji:** No it all depends on what we call conscious.

You see, the important thing is when we are able to see what we see, if we hear what we hear then we think we are conscious. But in this state, those things have stopped. We don't see things. We don't hear things because those things are coming under this Inquiry and Inference. So we are not observing anything. **We are not focusing our attention on anything. So that it is a state of calm: Tranquility of Mind.**

And in that Tranquility of Mind, we can see not that kind of picture. We don't picture, for example, that we had that quarrel in the past or that we saw something so attractive in the past. We are not thinking of the past, present, or future there. Or even something that might happen in the future. We are not thinking of those things at that point. It is simply a very peaceful color or maybe something like that, you see. So it's not, not seen as an object.

**Audience:** Bhante, you mentioned what we see is just a peaceful color in the mind, so what is the difference between this peaceful color and those “*nimitta*”

**Venerable Punnaji:** No! No! That word “*nimitta*” is also wrongly understood and wrongly used today.

I told you some time back that when we open our eyes, we don't see objects. That is the first thing to understand. **When we open our eyes, we see only colors. The objects are created by our thinking process. That is the process of perception.** Now when a painter paints a picture, the painter is only putting colors different places. So what you look at are simply colors, and then you do the creation of the object there.

So when you get out of this first “*Jhāna*” to the second “*Jhāna*”, you'll be seeing only colors and not images. That image creation has stopped at that point. So it's a thing like that. That real Process of Perception is gradually being reduced there. So there the main thing is the Rapture, Comfort, and Stillness of the Mind. So you're not creating Images there. The creating of Images is the Inquiry and Inference.

And then when you come to the next stage, even the Rapture disappears. Even that happiness is seen as a disturbance at that point. You become more tranquil, so even the happiness is seen as the kind of excitement like thing. And you calm down further. And you have only Comfort and Stillness.

And when you enter the fourth “*Jhāna*”, even the Comfort disappears. And Comfort is also seen as an excitement. You've become further tranquil, so Comfort disappearing doesn't mean that you've become uncomfortable. Both Comfort and discomfort disappear. When both comfort and discomfort disappears, what remains is still simple Stillness of Mind. Now these are very difficult for you to imagine. It is only by experiencing that; that you begin to really understand it. So we can only just speak about it.



## Four Levels of Ecstasy (*Jhāna*)



The word “**ecstasy**” means “standing out” (withdrawing) from the **Sensual Realm (*kāma-bhava*)** and reverting to the **Imagery Realm (*rūpa-bhava*)**.

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Now here it says: The word “**ecstasy**” means “standing out” or withdrawing from the **Sensual Realm (*kāma-bhava*)** and reverting to the **Imagery Realm (*rūpa-bhava*)**.

That means you do have something, not like an object, but only may be as a color or something. That's all that you see.

**So when you think of “*Samādhi*”, you're really talking about this Stillness of Mind, which is getting away from the emotional world.** And you're experiencing the absence of emotions. A tranquility and peacefulness of mind is a tranquility and peacefulness of mind.



# Three Realms of Experience



It is important to note there are 3 Realms of Experience:

- 1) **Sensual** Realm of Experience (*kāma-bhava*)
- 2) **Imagery** Realm of Experience (*rūpa-bhava*)
- 3) **Imageless** Realm of Experience (*arūpa-bhava*)

Ven. Dr. M. Punnaji Maha Thera

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So when we talk about these different Realms, it's very important to understand that the Buddha spoke of three Realms of Experience. Three Realms of Experience: The Sensual Realm, The Imagery Realm, and The Imageless Realm of Experience, which was called “*kāma-bhava*”, “*rūpa-bhava*”, and “*arūpa-bhava*”.

Usually translated as sensual world, form world, and formless world, but these translations don't give the proper meaning. So this why instead of using the words form and formless, we are talking about Imagery and Imageless. So the Imagery Realm and the Imageless Realm, and we come out of the Sensual Realm of experience or the Emotional Realm of experience.

So now I think this is the end of our discussion today, which is discussing what we called the “*Jhānas*” or “*Samādhi*”. But next time we'll be talking about the other Realms. And so now you can ask questions.

### Question & Answer 1

**Audience:** Unintelligible...

**Venerable Punnaji:** Well the problem is today the kind of meditation that people do it's not exactly what the Buddha has been speaking about. And there are many people who say I experience “*Samādhi*”, and they describe their “*Samādhi*” in a various ways. So it is not really possible to say that it is correct or not correct. So the main thing the Buddha said simply because a person says, “I have reached the first “*Jhāna*” or the second “*Jhāna*””, don't accept it. You have always to compare it with the teachings of the Buddha in the Sutras.

So you have to find out whether and no one can even claim to have attained any of those things because we may be wrong he said. So this is the important thing. **So better thing is to try to practice the “*Dhamma*” and begin to find out whether it works.** The important thing is don't worry about “*Samādhi*” or any of those things. **The important thing is to find out, “Has my unhappiness decreased?” “Am I free from worries and anxieties?”** That is the important thing to understand. “Am I a happy person?” Those are the ways that you can only find out, whether you have done it right or wrong.

If you have been meditating for even 50 years and still you're not happy, then there's something wrong with your meditation. You see once there was a time when I went to meet all these different yogis or yogis meditating. And I met someone who had been meditating for about 40 years. They said, “Oh! He is a very senior monk who has been meditating for 40 years.”

**Venerable Punnaji:** So I went to speak to him and I asked a question, "There is a thing called hypnosis, and do you practice that same thing, do you practice, what kind of meditation you practice?"

**Yogi:** He said, "I practice Anapanasati."

**Venerable Punnaji:** I said, "Anapanasati. But how do you do it?"

**Yogi:** He said, "You concentrate on the breath."

**Venerable Punnaji:** Then I said, "I have learned a thing called hypnosis, and there also if you begin to concentrate on something, you enter the hypnotic state."

**Yogi:** "No! No! No! This is not hypnosis."

**Venerable Punnaji:** And became very angry; you see then I became silent and I said, "I'm sorry and I said the wrong question." And I came away. So my conclusion was that although he had been meditating for 40 years he had not done it right. It's like that you see.

## Question & Answer 2

**Audience:** Unintelligible...

**Venerable Punnaji:** The "Jhāna" is not; this is "Paññā" without "Jhāna", is that what you're talking about?

**Audience:** "Yes! Yes!" Unintelligible...

**Venerable Punnaji:** Yeah that is going against this statement of the Buddha where the Buddha says, "Natthi jhānaṃ apannassa, paññā natthi ajhāyato." That there is no "Paññā" without the "Jhāna" and there is no "Jhāna" without "Paññā". So that means that can't be the right thing. I know that there are some who talk about something like that, and they have been also criticisms against that. And it has been a controversy. And so today there are a lot of things like that going on now more than 2500 or even 600 years after the Buddha. That original teaching has got mixed up with other teachings and so naturally got polluted; that what has happened. So this is why I was really spending my whole life to understand the original teaching of the Buddha. So what I'm talking about is really based on what I found that's all. **But you don't have to accept what I'm saying blindly. You have to use your own intelligence and find out whether what I'm saying can be true or not.** So that's the way that I present the "Dhamma". You have any other questions?



### Question & Answer 3

**Audience:** Unintelligible...

**Venerable Punnaji:** At the first “*Jhāna*” you'll have all that but as you enter the second, third, and fourth, your whole body begins to relax more and more and the mind calms down.

And you know I spoke about what is called the Cognitive and the Affective which are the activities of what we call the mind. And when we enter the “*Jhānas*”, that Affective gradually begins to stop. That activity which we recall the Affective gradually begins to stop because the emotional excitement is absent in the “*Jhānas*”. So the Affective is the Emotional Excitement. And so the mind has calmed down.

So in the “*Jhānas*” it is a gradual process of calming down of the Mind, the Emotions. But the Cognitive part has not disappeared. So but to a certain extent the Cognitive part is also being reduced, in the sense that, in the first “*Jhāna*” you are able to observe things, but in the second “*Jhāna*” that observation part is reduced. So your mind has calmed down to that level.

But still you are aware of Mental Images, Images. And but when you get out of the fourth “*Jhāna*”, you begin to reduce the Cognitive aspect gradually. That is why you enter what is called the Sphere of Infinite Space or the Realm of Infinite Space. And there you don't see objects at all. But what you see is simply Images; the Image of Emptiness. Emptiness is Empty Space.

And it is without limits because every object is a limitation of a certain area. So when there is Empty Space, it is without limits. So this is why it is not finite, infinite. And then you reduce further by taking your attention away from even that object of Empty Space, then you are simply Aware of Being Aware. That's all. You are aware of being aware. That's all. You are not aware of anything.

And then you give up even that and you come to that state called Aware of Nothingness. You are not aware of anything. But still you're aware of that thing called Nothingness. That means that Nothingness has become an object.

Then you give up that also. That is where you come to “Neither Sensation Nor No Sensation”. Then from there comes the Cessation of Sensation and Feeling, where that whole Cognitive Process stops at that point. **So it is a gradual stopping of that activity which we call the Mind. So mind is not an entity but an activity. So it's a gradual stopping of that activity.** Yeah?

**Audience:** Unintelligible...

**Venerable Punnaji:** There's no going beyond. It is simply a stopping; stopping of an activity.

**Audience:** Stopping of an activity at that level consciousness doesn't exist.

**Venerable Punnaji:** No! That is the real unconsciousness. Yeah.

### **Question & Answer 4**

**Audience:** I am talking about the ecstasy.

**Venerable Punnaji:** Ecstasy

**Audience:** Yeah the “*Jhāna*”

**Venerable Punnaji:** Not about your sons?

**Audience:** No. When you talk about the “*Jhāna*” from the third “*Jhāna*” to the fourth “*Jhāna*”, is it in one sitting meditation? 1<sup>st</sup> “*Jhāna*”, 2<sup>nd</sup> “*Jhāna*”, 3<sup>rd</sup> “*Jhāna*”, 4<sup>th</sup> “*Jhāna*”? And how long is the duration? Is it for the whole day?

**Venerable Punnaji:** Well okay you sit, sit; I will answer that question. There is a kind of meditation, where you can enter the 1<sup>st</sup> “*Jhāna*”, 2<sup>nd</sup> “*Jhāna*”, 3<sup>rd</sup> “*Jhāna*”, 4<sup>th</sup> “*Jhāna*”, all at once one sitting. If you want to do that, I can send you to the, not only the fourth “*Jhāna*” even 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and all that. But that is hypnosis, not really “*Jhāna*”. That’s the problem. There are people who practice that and they think they have attained the “*Jhānas*”. But the problem is those are not the real “*Jhānas*”. You have to be able to distinguish between hypnosis and the “*Jhāna*”.

### **Question & Answer 5**

**Audience:** Bhante my question may be bit funny but I hope you can explain to me about this. So to me may be Buddhism is a lot about the mind, on the mind. All we talk about is the mind here. So now you also talk all about “*Jhānas*”. Now I just wonder do we have medical science, 2011 now okay.

**Venerable Punnaji:** 2011?

**Audience:** Now is 2011.

**Venerable Punnaji:** Ah! Yeah! Yeah!

**Audience:** For now, I just wonder; do we have the medical science to have so call shortcut on meditation?

**Audience laughs.**

**Audience:** It looks funny. It looks funny. Not many people can meditate. Maybe the mind is very abstract. The mind; the human mind is very abstract. I believe, I believe, I believe medical science may have it or may not have it to help us achieve what a lot the Buddha achieved in 2012?

**Venerable Punnaji:** Well! Your question is very good. And medical science has done a lot of research today. They have been doing a lot of research on the brain. And whatever they have found is all in agreement with what the Buddha has done. They have not been able to go beyond what the Buddha did. So the shortest cut was explained by the Buddha but the problem is today most people don't know about that shortest cut. **And also it is very difficult to achieve it because the modern human being is very much carried away by Emotions.** It is the emotion that is blocking the progress. So when we are carried away by emotions, we have to learn to get rid of the emotions. And that also the Buddha has pointed out, but very few people know about this. **And very few people even if they know, very few people are able to practice it because the Emotions are very powerful.**

So this is the problem. Now they have discovered that in the brain, there is an area, where there is like a switch. Like a switch you can turn on the emotional part and let the thinking part go on or you can stop the, emotional, the thinking part and get the emotional part to go on. **So all that can be done only by your thinking, not by instruments or even by physical operation or something like that.**

They have even tried those methods but they only distort things. That's all that can be done. But they have done a lot of studies on this. If you read some of the modern books written by the researchers, you begin to understand. **Still you have to follow the Buddha. That's the only method.** The modern scientists can't do anything. That is the important thing to understand.

## Question & Answer 6

**Audience:** Bhante, you explained just now on the initial part in terms of the Buddha and his understanding in terms of creation. Many religions out there in terms of belief, beliefs as in, believing as in terms of submission to the lord whether Christianity or Hinduism, for example, and following it without questioning, we also have in Buddhism the first part in which the Buddha actually gave in terms of that Kalamas Sutra is “*Ehipassiko*”, which is come here and make up your mind of your own. So what you explained just now in terms of the “*Paṭicca-Samuppāda*” is distinctively different than any other religions in the modern era. We are actually questioning our belief in terms of how we look at things and understanding how we have to make us happy by not what we see or what we think but how we have to orientate ourselves towards making ourselves happy. For example, now in Malaysia everyone is worried about the future of our generation, our children, for example but is that worth anything to worry about? If by what you're teaching us here it's like just being in the present and the past or the future is not any bother to us. Thank you

**Venerable Punnaji:** Your question is about the...

**Audience:** Having the right orientation

**Venerable Punnaji:** ...what is going on in the politics today here?

**Audience:** Not the politics but having the right understanding because a lot of times in religion it's all about belief

**Venerable Punnaji:** Belief yeah.

**Audience:** What we learn in Buddhism is about understanding.

**Venerable Punnaji:** Ah! Yeah! Yeah!

**Audience:** Understanding that things change.

**Venerable Punnaji:** Yeah!

**Audience:** And the realization that we need not be attached to what to political or whatever situation we are facing

**Venerable Punnaji:** Attach to beliefs.

**Audience:** Yeah

**Venerable Punnaji:** If you become attached to beliefs, than you are going in the wrong direction. So instead of belief, you have to start thinking for yourself. That is the important thing. **That is the main message of the Buddha is to make people think because most people they don't like to think.**

They think, “Let other people do the thinking, and I will do the believing.” And so they believe and then act according to the beliefs that most people believe. So you’ll begin to think, “What is the majority believe in?” So I’ll follow the majority. This is what animals do. You see animals are all the time in groups. And whatever the group is doing they will also do. So in the same way the human beings are also like that. That is the meaning of culture. **Culture means living in the group.** And whatever the group is doing, you also begin to do; whatever other people do I also do.

**Audience:** So Bhante.

**Venerable Punnaji:** Yeah

**Audience:** One of the points, which the Buddha put in terms of the Eightfold Noble Path, was actually Right Understanding.

**Venerable Punnaji:** Yeah

**Audience:** And to have the right understanding, we have been brought up by the experience of what our parents taught us, what society’s norms are, education. Like what our gentleman here asked about how’s the shortcut towards doing what the Buddha had taught 2600 years ago, think what the Buddha taught was actually to become a monk or go into isolation like in the Sutta or a household life or homeless life. It is like to walk a path which is less traveled and find solitude, be peaceful, help the Dhamma Viharas, and cultivate your own mental strength towards liberation.

**Venerable Punnaji:** Well the problem is that we are not trying to run away from society and trying to go into the forest and meditate. That’s not the main thing there. **The main thing is that we have to start thinking on our own. We are born with a certain amount of intelligence. And we must make use of the intelligence. Instead of just being carried away by emotions and being drawn by other people, you’ll have to start thinking on your own. That’s the most important thing. And this is the main message of the Buddha: self-reliance.** That is what all the psychologists talk about today, and also people who talk about how to be successful in life. **You have to start thinking on your own.**

## Question & Answer 7

**Audience:** For the next lesson are we going to still continue with the...

**Venerable Punnaji:** Well Yeah! We are going to continue on ... what's our next...

**Billy Tan:** The Seven Steps to Awakening

**Venerable Punnaji:** Ah! The Seven Steps to Awakening,

“*Satta bojjhaṅgā*”. Yeah there we are really talking about what is called the “*Vipassanā*” meditation. So we'll be talking about that.

## Question & Answer 8

**Audience:** Bhante, one question this is a question. You talk about the “*Jhāna*”. The first “*Jhāna*” there is “*Vicāra*”, “*Vitakka*”. Okay.

**Venerable Punnaji:** “*Vitakka*” and “*Vicāra*”. Yeah!

**Audience:** The Inquiry and inference.

**Venerable Punnaji:** Yeah Yeah Yeah!

**Audience:** That means it's a conceptual thinking. Now at the second level at second “*Jhāna*” this stops?

**Venerable Punnaji:** Yeah

**Audience:** Now I just want to find out what happens to our five senses at the moment? How are they acting, the smelling, the hearing, the tasting? Is it still having a conceptual or just an experiencing of the smelling or hearing at that point?

**Venerable Punnaji:** No; no! You can experience but you don't base your thinking on that because you don't think. The thinking has stopped. You don't form concepts.

**Audience:** That means tasting just tasting process; hearing is hearing?

**Venerable Punnaji:** You may hear but you don't try to find out what do I hear and...

**Audience:** No perception.

**Venerable Punnaji:** Yeah!

## Question & Answer 9

**Audience:** Last question Bhante.

**Venerable Punnaji:** Last question. You have another question?

**Audience:** Okay I am very ignorant Buddhist; ignorant Buddhist

**Venerable Punnaji:** Is this the first time you came here?

**Audience:** Second time

**Venerable Punnaji:** Second time? Ah!

**Audience:** My question is why is it that, I ask my study group, why is it the white men, the American so called the English speaking world, why are they so interested in Buddhism?

**Venerable Punnaji:** Why are they what?

**Audience:** Why are they so interested in Buddhism? Why are they becoming monks?

**Venerable Punnaji:** Ah!

**Audience:** They want to follow the precepts. Why? Why? There must be something?

**Venerable Punnaji:** Oh yes!

**Audience:** there must be something. I don't know. Why? Why? Are they stupid? I don't know. I don't think they are stupid, but the thing is why? Why are they so interested to become monks like Bhante, you know; hoping to get “*Nibbāna*”. I used to ask my Christian friends, is it you're going to heaven? Then I say, “Where is heaven?” “Where is hell?” Well I ask I wonder the same thing about God all you hear is talk I never see him... The same question is they ask me the same problem, “Hey you Buddhist you talk of “*Nibbāna*”. Where is “*Nibbāna*”? Have you seen somebody reach “*Nibbāna*”? Has anyone proved to us they're going to “*Nibbāna*”? So that is my question, Bhante. Thank you.

**Venerable Punnaji:** Good! Good! You have been thinking in the right way but the problem is if I begin to explain that I will take another one hour. So the best thing is can you keep it for the next time? Huh? You remember the question and ask me the next time because now it is 10:00. It's just 10 minutes to 10. So in 10 minutes I will just give you a very short answer to that question.

This is something that I have been saying before but may be in your absence. It was during the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> century that this thing called science began in the West. And when science began, before science began, they were all believing in this god who created the world. It dominated by Christianity to great extent. And now when science came, they came across a new concept, new way of looking at things and that is called Determinism. Determinism means that everything that happened in the world happened only due to the presence of the necessary conditions; that every occurrence is determined by the presence of the necessary conditions. That is the meaning of Determinism. And when they saw this, they saw that everything was happening only when the necessary conditions are there.

Now because otherwise in ancient times, people thought that when there was thunder and lightning, earthquakes, all that was done by God. And even now there are some people who think like that, and every occurrence in the world natural phenomena all occurred due to God doing these things. But when this science came up, they began to understand that when it was raining, it was not god pouring water, it was due to the presence of the necessary conditions. When there is an earthquake, it is due to the presence of the necessary conditions.

Now in ancient times, people saw birds flying and they also like to fly. Human beings also wanted to fly, but they didn't have wings to fly. So they first started creating wings to fly, but that was a failure. Then some people who are thinking in a scientific way began to find out, "What are the conditions necessary for flight to take place?" How does the bird fly? Why does when the bird swings the wings, it goes up; how is that? What are the conditions necessary? And the Wright brothers made the airplane by studying the conditions.

Now in ancient times when they wanted flame or fire, they didn't know how to produce a fire, so they had to preserve fire from some place. And but they study what are the conditions necessary for a flame to arise and they produce the matchstick. The moment they produce the matchstick they only have to strike the match and the fire comes.



So like that they began to discover how things happen, and the result is the modern technology. All modern scientific technology is based on that, same principle. So with the coming of this insight, people lost faith in their religious dogma. But they also knew that in religion there is an important thing part of the religion; although, these dogmas are not acceptable but still they speak about something called good and bad. And this is very necessary.

And so they didn't know how to define what is good and what is bad. Because even today all the philosophers begin to talk about good and bad and they begin to say, "Nothing is good or bad, thinking makes it so." So in other words, they couldn't even define what's good and bad this properly. But religion was emphasizing good and bad. So they thought religion is necessary although it is wrong. So let us just defend religion and that is how the westerners started trying to do it, but it didn't work properly because revolution took place. There was the French Revolution. There was the Marxist Revolution. And so many wars started, then even churches were destroyed and priests were killed, even kings were killed, queens were killed as a result of this thing.

So gradually the western people have come to realize that here there is a religion which is very different from our religion which is Buddhism. And here they don't talk about the God that created the world, but they also talk about what is good and bad right and wrong. So they become interested in studying this. And that is how when they studied, they become so impressed by that they begin to start practicing. And that is why these people become monks and nuns.

And now they are in United States; there are different centers all started by the westerners themselves. These were not things that were started by missionaries. Now here all the Christian churches and all Christianity were started by missionaries coming from the west. But in the west there are Buddhist centers and many people are practicing Buddhism and meditation becoming monks, not because we have gone there and propagated that Buddhism; that's not true. But all these people are doing, the Buddhist who go to the west, they're only catering to the eastern people who are living there. They're not doing any propagation work really.

I know it because I had been there for a long time, and so I have not done much in terms of propagation myself. And so this is all the westerners themselves have come to the east and learn Buddhism. They have been monks living as monks. And then there were Jack Kornfield, Joseph Goldstein, they started the, they gave up robes and they started the Buddhist centers and teaching meditation.

And once I was invited to a meeting where they had the Buddhist Teachers Conference. So I also went as a teacher of Buddhism and there we also had the Dalai Lama coming there. I was surprised to see so many Buddhist teachers thousands of Buddhist teachers there. And if the teachers were that figured, then if you count the students there must be more than that and I was surprised how much Buddhism has become popular in the west. All this is because of this. Now it is exactly 10:00. I hope I answered your question to some extent. Huh?